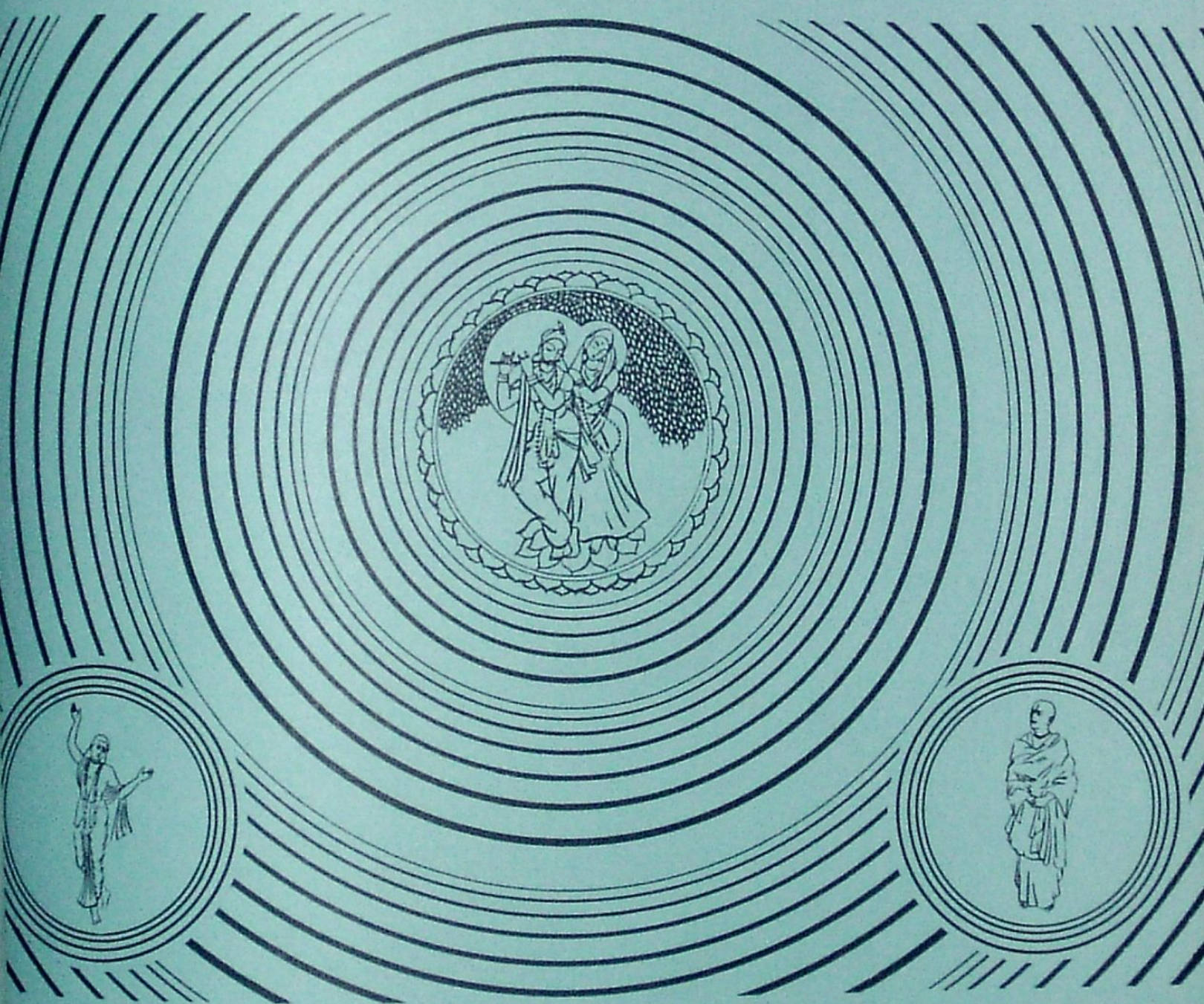


FEATURING:

PSYCHEDELICS AND KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS--a statement  
THE MAN OF WISDOM by Satsvarupa Das Brahmachary  
DOUBT, THY NAME IS BONDAGE by Hayagriva Das Brahmachary

# BACK TO GODHEAD



INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS, INC.

Vol. I, No. 7

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## Regarding Psychedelics

The following is a letter received by the editors which pretty well speaks for itself:

Dear Editors,

In your December 1st issue of Back to Godhead, you ask for comment by your readers when they feel it necessary, and I would herewith like to offer a humble observation.

Far far too often I find your philosophy hyper-critical of LSD and other psychedelic chemicals. Speaking personally, I would be much more likely to join in your celebrations if it were not for the fact that I do not wish to be made to feel guilty about my past ingestion of these mysterious sacraments. Furthermore, in all honesty, I am sure you will admit that the majority of people now deeply interested in Krishna Consciousness would never have been so were it not for the spark of spiritual curiosity ignited in them by their LSD sessions.

This is an age of machine misery and computerized death, and any avenue of spiritual seeking which the American people seek to tread is far better than it's alternative. Don't choke yourself off by participating in an undeclared war against acid and grass. People will come to you without this. No doubt more than you are presently receiving. Let the beauty of your quest speak eloquently for itself, and let all people you reach be proud of their own humble search. Too many of us have been guilty for too long, and we are tired of it.

I hope I have made my point. I think it is an important one.

Peace and Love,

San Francisco, California

First of all, we'd like to express our gratitude and appreciation for this sincere and well-put comment. We've withheld the writer's name rather than chance hurting him in some way. In response to his questions, Hayagriva Das (Howard Wheeler) has written the following essay entitled "Psychedelic Drugs and Krishna Consciousness," which will also be published as a separate pamphlet. We hope this question and answer will clarify our position for all who are in doubt of it. We will be glad to hear more from our readers on this subject.

And now, Mr. Wheeler's essay:



## PSYCHEDELIC DRUGS AND KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS

Due to the recent psychedelic drug movement in America, many people have come to us and asked about the Society's stand regarding LSD, gunga (marijuana), peyote, mescaline, psilocibin, yage, etc. In reply, we would like to say that as a society, the International Society For Krishna Consciousness has nothing to do with drugs or drug intoxication. We are neither for nor against the use or repression of such drugs. We are not qualified to judge positive or negative effects, and therefore our policy is one of non-interference, especially in regards to legalization, administration, etc. Believing that people naturally do what they like, we feel that it is not our mission to condemn the actions of others but to suggest, in a positive way, their adopting Krishna Consciousness and chanting the Maha (Hare Krishna) Mantra. Drugs and drug movements are not our concern. We are interested in the eternal Reality, which is Krishna, the Supreme Lord.

However, members of the Society and those seriously pursuing Krishna Consciousness, following the Vedic Way and the injunctions of the Spiritual Master (guru) Swami A. C. Bhaktivedanta, do not take intoxicants such as alcohol and drugs. Our authorities are the Spiritual Master, the Bhagavad Gita, and, of course, Lord Krishna-- and none of these recommends the use of drugs for spiritual development.

There are a number of reasons we do not encourage psychedelic drugs for those who are interested in pursuing Krishna Consciousness.



1) We believe that our natural state of consciousness is one of ecstasy. Therefore it is not necessary to attempt to alter our consciousness by a chemical process. In actuality, we are eternally in samadhi, in union with God, being His eternal parts and parcels. This is our constitutional position-- it is not a position brought about by fastings, vigils, drugs, self-mutilation, etc. The position is already there. If we do not see our position or understand it, it is due to our ignorance. The way out of ignorance is Krishna Consciousness which helps us to attain our natural unconditional state of freedom and bliss (Sat-Chit-Ananda) in Krishna. To the best of our knowledge, drugs only construct a reliance on a material substance and lead to bondage to that substance-- therefore, for our purposes, they do not lead to unconditional freedom, but to spiritual regression.

2) Drugs, as an artificial means of exhilaration, are not new. Psychedelics in the form of peyote and "magic" mushrooms have been known to American Indians for hundreds of years, and thousands of years ago, "soma" and similar drugs are recorded to have been used in India. Over the centuries, psychedelics have been known to and rejected by great saints, mystics, sages, incarnations and spiritual leaders. A 130 years ago, the American transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson was also aware of attempts to attain cosmic consciousness by abortive, artificial means:

It is a secret which every intellectual man quickly learns, that beyond the energy of his possessed and conscious intellect he is capable of a new energy (as of an intellect doubled on itself) by abandonment to the nature of things; that beside his privacy of power as an individual man, there is a great public power on which he can draw, by unlocking his human doors, and suffering the ethereal tides to roll and circulate through him; then he is caught up into the life of the Universe . . . . For if in any manner we can stimulate this instinct, new passages



are opened for us into nature; the mind flows into and through things hardest and highest, and the metamorphosis is possible . . . This is the reason why bards love wine, mead, narcotics, coffee, tea, opium, the fumes of sandalwood and tobacco, or whatever other procurers of animal exhilaration. All men avail themselves of such means as they can, to add this extraordinary power to their normal powers. (From Essays, 2nd Series, "The Poet")

However, Emerson makes it clear that he does not condone such artificial means, which he considers to be used by an inferior type of man. He also deems the results to be imperfect and temporary, for in actuality deterioration and dissipation are provoked by reliance on external stimuli.

Never can any advantage be taken of nature by a trick. The spirit of the world, the great calm presence of the Creator, comes not forth to the sorceries of opium or of wine. The sublime vision comes to the pure and simple soul in a clean and chaste body. That is not an inspiration, which we owe to narcotics, but some counterfeit excitement and fury. Milton says that the lyric poet may drink wine and live generously, but the epic poet, he who shall sing of the gods and their descent unto men, must drink water out of a wooden bowl . . . His cheerfulness should be the gift of the sunlight; the air should suffice for his inspiration, and he should be tipsy with water. (From "The Poet")

3) The great mystics, incarnations, sages, religious leaders, etc. through the ages never used drugs in their spiritual undertakings nor advocated their adherents taking them. This includes Lord Krishna, Brahma, Vasudeva, Narada Muni, Shankara, the great Indian acharyas, Lord Chaitanya, Lord Buddha, Lao Tzu, Huang Po, Confucius, Mohammed, Socrates, Plato, Lord Jesus Christ, His apostles and disciples, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. John of the Cross, innumerable other Christian saints and mystics, the metaphysical poets, Milton, Dante, William Blake, the American transcendentalists, Emerson, Thoreau, Emily Dickinson and Whitman--the list can extend indefinitely. And typically, the principle religions of the world-- Buddhism, Taoism, Mohammedism, Christianity, Judaism and Hinduism-- forbid the use of drugs by their



adherents. Obviously, drugs are not necessary for spiritual realization, and they are not recent discoveries. Children feel no need for them; nor will adults if they only see things as they truly are.

4) Krishna Consciousness involves a firm belief in Krishna, the Supreme Lord, Who is the Absolute Controller and Proprietor of all things. He has not given any indication that drugs provide a legitimate means for reaching Him. He sets down the way by which man may reach His Supreme eternal Abode in the Bhagavad Gita, and no mention is made of drugs. Quite the contrary, He condemns those who follow their own way to the exclusion of Scriptures (Gita, IX/3; XVI/23-24).

5) From our personal observation of LSD-users who have come to the Society under the influence of or shortly after an LSD "trip," we have found them to have been generally confused, disoriented, and badly in need of help. Their conversations have not indicated them to be enlightened beings. Many have had to resort to hospitalization, psychiatrists, etc. Not only are the drug's results artificial and imaginary, but it tends to make the user think himself further progressed spiritually than he actually is. Many young "avatars" have dropped by the Society to teach Swami Bhaktivedanta about God. In fact, some have claimed to be the Shining, Omnipotent One.

6) The effects of the drugs are only temporary; the drug user is "up" shortly after taking the drug, but after a few hours he "comes down." Krishna Consciousness teaches how to "stay high forever" without bringdowns by chanting one's way into eternity. Nor do drugs free one from material hankerings such as food, sex desires, etc., but sometimes provoke desires.



7) Some members of the Society experienced psychedelic drugs extensively before meeting Swami Bhaktivedanta, and they now no longer take them. Some consider their previous drug experiences a kind of spiritual "undergraduate" study and now consider Krishna Consciousness graduate school study. Krishna Consciousness teaches one how to swim in the spiritual ocean without water-wings.

In conclusion, we would like to encourage the positive and age-old method of Krishna Consciousness, approved by the great acharyas (spiritual masters) of India, as a true method of spiritual advancement and development. The results are eternal. Through sincere practise, one can come to know his relationship to God, to the world, God's relationship to the Universe and to the individual soul, and ultimately one can attain realization that one is not matter but spirit soul eternally related to the Supreme and, through Krishna's grace, reach His supreme and eternal Abode. We encourage psychedelic drug users to finish their experimentation, graduate once and for all, and take up God realization under a qualified spiritual master such as Swami Bhaktivedanta. Then they can chant their way into eternity and face God independant of "sugarcubes."

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For further information, write the Society.



# BY THE MERCY OF KRISHNA

We hope the foregoing letter and reply have clarified the position of the Society on the issue of psychedelic drugs.

(The reason for the somewhat confused numbering of pages is that the bulk of our magazine is typed on stencils far in advance of publication, and the present additions caught us off guard. Sorry.)

We'd like to express our appreciation for the fine work of our art directress, Jadurani Devi Dasi (Judy Koslofsky), whose picture of Lord Krishna follows our cover.

The opening of the Radha Krishna Temple at 518 Frederick Street in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district has been a very satisfying success. The West Coast certainly seems to be fertile ground for the growth of Krishna Consciousness. Regarding the arrival of Swami Bhaktivedanta on Monday, January 16, at San Francisco Airport, here is an excerpt from a letter sent by one of the editors, who was present:

"There were well over fifty people, chanting and holding flowers. Great crowds had gathered to learn of the dignitary. They must have been quite amazed as Swami--with a smile as broad as San Francisco Bay--came through the door. He walked through a gauntlet of well-wishers who each bestowed a blossom into his hands. Then we marched to the parking lot chanting and holding hands. It was ecstasy in itself, I can't describe how beautiful. But, naturally, nothing could surpass Swamiji himself for beauty, as he soon showed us. For, while we were waiting for the baggage to arrive, he raised his hands and began to dance, with Ron holding his umbrella over him to keep off the sunlight. Allen Ginsberg was there also, and he joined us, as everyone began to dance and sing. As he danced, Swamiji took handfuls of the flowers which had been given him, and distributed them to just about each and every person there."

Six days after his arrival, the Swami initiated four devotees, and on the following day performed a wedding ceremony, at which a hundred and fifty guests were present. Kirtan is being held at the Frederick Street Temple on the same schedule as here on



Second Avenue, so if you happen to be out that way, do stop in and join the chanting.

Although we haven't had any word on the Mantra Rock Dance at the Avalon Ballroom as yet (it is in progress even as this is being written, Sunday, January 29), we feel confident that the affair will be a great success. The kind participation of Allen Ginsberg, the Greatful Dead, Moby Dick and a number of other celebrities is duly noted and much appreciated.

More on California next issue.

Hare Krishna,

The Editors.



## ON CHANTING THE HARE KRISHNA MANTRA

by A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

The transcendental vibration established by the chanting of HARE KRISHNA, HARE KRISHNA, KRISHNA KRISHNA, HARE HARE: HARE RAMA, HARE RAMA, RAMA RAMA, HARE HARE is the sublime method for reviving our transcendental consciousness. As living spiritual souls, we are all originally Krishna conscious entities, but due to our association with matter-- from time immemorial-- our consciousness is now adulterated by the material atmosphere. The material atmosphere, in which we are now living, is called Maya, or illusion. Maya means that which is not. And what is this illusion? The illusion is that we are all trying to be lords of material nature, while actually we are under the grip of the stringent laws of material nature. When a servant artificially tries to imitate the all powerful master, it is called illusion. We are trying to exploit the resources of material nature, but actually we are becoming more and more entangled in its complexities. Therefore, we are engaged in a hard struggle to conquer the stringent laws of material nature, but we are ever more dependent on it. This illusory struggle against material nature can be stopped at once by revival of our eternal Krishna consciousness.

Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare is the transcendental process for reviving this original pure consciousness. By chanting this transcendental vibration, we can cleanse away all misgivings within our hearts. The basic principle of all



such misgivings is the false consciousness that I am the lord of all I survey.

Krishna consciousness is not an artificial imposition on the mind. This consciousness is the original natural energy of the living entity. When we hear the transcendental vibration, this consciousness is revived. This simplest method is recommended for this age. By practical experience also, one can perceive that by the simple chanting of this Mahamantra, or the great chanting for deliverance, one can at once feel a transcendental ecstasy coming through from the spiritual stratum. In the material concept of life we are busy in the matter of sense gratification as if we were in the lower animal stage of life. A little elevated from this status of sense gratification, one is engaged in mental speculation for the purpose of getting out of the material clutches. A little elevated from this speculative status, when one is intelligent enough, one tries to find out the Supreme Cause of all causes-- within and without. And when one is factually on the plane of spiritual understanding, surpassing the stages of sense, mind and intelligence, he is then on the transcendental plane. This chanting of the Hare Krishna Mantra is enacted from the spiritual platform, and thus this sound vibration surpasses all lower status of consciousness-- namely sensual, mental, and intellectual. There is no need, therefore, to understand the language of the Mantra, nor is there any need for mental speculation, nor any intellectual adjustment for chanting this Mahamantra. It is automatic, from the spiritual platform, and as such anyone can take part in vibrating this transcendental sound without any previous qualifications. In a more advanced



stage, of course, one is not expected to commit offences on grounds of spiritual understanding.

In the beginning, there may not be the presence of all transcendental ecstasies-- which are eight in number. These are: 1) Being stopped as though dumb; 2) perspiration; 3) standing up of hairs on the body; 4) dislocation of voice; 5) trembling; 6) fading of the body; 7) crying in ecstasy; and 8) trance. But there is no doubt that chanting for a while takes one immediately to the spiritual platform, and one shows the first symptom of this in the urge to dance along with the chanting of the Mantra. We have seen this practically. Even a child can take part in the chanting and dancing. Of course, for one who is too entangled in material life, it takes a little more time to come to the standard point, but even such a materially engrossed man is raised to the spiritual platform very quickly. When it is chanted by a pure devotee of the Lord in love, it has the greatest efficacy on hearers, and as such this chanting should be heard from the lips of a pure devotee of the Lord, so that immediate effects can be achieved. As far as possible, chanting from the lips of non-devotees should be avoided. Milk touched by the lips of a serpent has poisonous effects.

The word Hare is the form of addressing the energy of the Lord, and the words Krishna and Rama are forms of addressing the Lord Himself. Both Krishna and Rama mean the Supreme pleasure, and Hara is the supreme pleasure-energy of the Lord. The Supreme Pleasure Energy of the Lord helps us to reach the Lord.

The material energy called Maya is also one of the multi-energies of the Lord. We the living entities are also the energy-



marginal energy-- of the Lord. The living entities are described as superior to material energy. When the superior energy is in contact with the inferior energy, an incompatible situation arises, but when the superior marginal energy is in contact with the Superior Energy, called Hara, it is established in its happy, normal condition.

These three words, namely Hara, Krishna and Rama, are the transcendental seeds of the Mahamantra. The chanting is a spiritual call for the Lord and His Energy, to give protection to the conditioned soul. This chanting is exactly like the genuine cry of a child for its mother's presence. Mother Hara helps the devotee to achieve the Lord Father's Grace, and the Lord reveals Himself to the devotee who chants this Mantra sincerely.

No other means of spiritual realisation is as effective in this age of quarrel and hypocrisy as is the Mahamantra.

Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare  
Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.

\*\*\*\*\*

These red berries of devotion  
Mark the sweet names of God  
And in touching them I pluck the fruit of paradise.  
These red berries of devotion  
Are clusters of my soul's delight  
Gathered on a branch of the Real Tree, Whose Roots  
I cannot fathom.  
Sacred as the flute of Krishna's atmosphere  
A treasure most sublime,  
I praise these sparkling young red berries of devotion.

-- Rayarama Das Brahmachary  
(Raymond Mareis)



## THE MAN OF WISDOM

by Satsvarupa Das Brahmachary  
(Stephen Guarino)

According to the Bhagavad Gita, those "virtuous ones" who actually come to God, are of four kinds: "the man in distress, the seeker for knowledge, the seeker for wealth, and the man of wisdom." (Gita, VII/16) The distressed, who ask sanctuary at the Feet of the Lord, are quickly given ease and shelter. This is a fact: the life of devotional service leads one out of the entanglements of the perishable world. Refuge is granted through worship. For those in distress (anyone without Krishna consciousness is in some measure of distress) God's mercy grants peace, the easing of their burden. Whatever the frustration, whatever the pain, whatever the loneliness, loss or tragedy, it is balmed with the sincere and faithful hearing of the Vedic message (scripture). People in distress, however, are liable to come and go. With the rise of new "opportunities," or after a period of rejuvenation in association with the Lord and His devotees, the distressed may leave the Supreme's service in order to make a fresh attack on the mazes of illusion, thus falling back into the clutches of the temporary, material world.

The second "virtuous one" is the man who is seeking knowledge. He is curious to know God. God is All-Famous, and so the curious man becomes interested, and wants to know Him. Curiosity is a good reason-- as any reason is-- to turn to God, but if such a man applies only his curiosity to the Godhead, his intellectual



enquiry will soon show itself to be endless, since the Divine Person cannot be measured by our human potencies. The Ruler of all universes and planets, the Source and Proprietor of Life and Wisdom will be enquired after by the speculative, knowledge-seeking man in birth after birth, until at long length the seeker concludes that "Vasudeva (Krishna) is All." (Gita, VII/19) Only then does the imperishable wisdom begin.

In a similar way, the seeker for wealth (whose virtue is in turning to God to satisfy his desires), will probably never actually be satisfied, not even by a deluge of gold. Neither will he ever advance closer toward God, until he goes beyond wanting God to be his order-supplier. In the Gita Lord Krishna says, "But temporary is the fruit gained by these men of small minds." (7/23)

That leaves us the man of wisdom. "Of these, the wise one, who is ever in constant union with the Divine, whose devotion is single-minded, is the best. For I am supremely dear to him, and he is dear to Me." (Gita, VII/16) Why is the man of wisdom dear to God? Because he wants nothing in return. The man of wisdom puts aside his desires for those things for which others are searching, and seeks Krishna's pleasure. He realizes that his true, original life is beyond the color of this temporary world of sense-pleasure, sadness, wealth-hankering and puffed-up knowledge-seeking. The wise man knows that he is transcendental, like Krishna. Krishna is above, and unaffected by, the pangs of bondage; and we are Krishna's parts and parcels. While of course Krishna has the power to bestow gold and to dry up our tears of misery, asking for these things is like praying in hell-fire for a sumptuous meal and a woman, rather than asking for release from the flames.



Krishna is transcendental, and when we pray to Him it is for mere association with Him. Never mind the list of special requests for our particular situation on earth. Just pray to see Krishna. Krishna is the fullest Enjoyer and the wise man has the single desire to become His devotee. We have a chant in praise of Krishna: "Hare Krishna, Hare Rama." This chant bestows the very wisdom we are speaking of. Therefore, the wise man's position is to withdraw from all material attachment, both good and evil, and to chant the Holy Name of God. This is the wise man's single need and prime duty.

How does the wise man subsist? He subsists on the nectar of transcendental service to the Lord. He feeds and cares for his body as you would care for the upkeep of a functionary pushcart. He eats for Krishna, after first offering his food to Krishna. He works at Krishna's business and talks on Krishna's behalf. Krishna says in the Gita, "whose devotion is single-minded is best." Single-minded devotion is best because Krishna says so, and He is the Single Supreme Person. Devotion to that to which we are inseparably connected is, after all, wise. Since we are all parts of the Godhead, our constitutional function is to serve as His parts, just as the hands serve the body, of which they are part. The hands never try to consume food themselves, absorbing it through the fingernails. Nor do they make a request of the body that they be given their "independance." Yet, the hand performs well in its own miraculous sphere, making music, typewriting, grasping weights. Why, therefore, are we clamoring to God for special benediction? We already have the blessings of function: to serve the Eternal eternally. The wise man is



aware of his natural, original position and is using both body and soul in the service of his Lord. If we frantically try to consume God's gifts for our own enjoyment, we will very quickly reach a fruitless end of this mortal road, and will have to begin again: and, if we are not wise, the next time we will again meet the end of the road.

To do transcendental service is to surrender our will unto His Will. But no, we have to learn it again and again, stubbornly-- we have to learn that we actually have no business apart from God. We are wise when we reach the conclusion that God is the Bestower and is truly all. "Vasudeva is all that is." (Gita, VII/19)

When thou hast known it, thou shalt not fall again into this confusion, O Pandava, for by this thou shalt see all existences without exception in the Self, then in Me. (Gita, IV/35)

Our independence from Him is our illusion. Similarly fantastic is the pursuit of our own gratification, the desire for love apart from Him, or wealth apart from Him, or happiness apart from Him. The wise man leaves the mirage in favor of the Reality. Absolute Reality is to willingly serve the Lord. We are already His servitors; we cannot avoid the work. All miseries stem from forgetting this factual situation: There is the Lord, and there are ourselves-- and we are His own. He is dear to us because we are dear to Him. Love is the key. And the wise man loves God.



## DOUBT, THY NAME IS BONDAGE

by Hayagriva Das Brahmachary  
(Howard Wheeler)

But the man who is ignorant and without faith and always doubting goes to ruin. Not this world nor the world beyond nor happiness is for the doubting soul. (Krishna in the Gita, IV/40)

If the sun and moon should doubt  
They'd immediately go out.

--William Blake

Doubt has been called the shadow of truth. At the very beginning of one's spiritual life, a devotee is invariably beset by a legion of doubts. These doubts, disguised as demons of innumerable colors and forms, all have one purpose: to obscure the light of truth from the vision of the devotee. Francis Bacon once wrote, "In contemplation, if a man begins with certainties he shall end in doubts; but if he be content to begin with doubts, he shall end in certainties." In this age especially one is inclined to disbelieve and doubt-- to doubt Scripture, to doubt God, to doubt oneself. This age is called "Kaliyuga" and is characterised by strife, doubt, ignorance, chaos and disagreement. So at the outset of one's spiritual life, needless to say, innumerable doubts will present themselves. These demon doubts always surround the treshold of Knowledge-Bliss-Absolute. As the neophyte stands at this treshold, confused and fearful, the doubts assail him and tell him to turn back, not to jump into the ocean



of Divine bliss, and the timid soul, afraid of being hurt, hardly believing that it is eternal bliss and knowledge awaiting him, often fidgets at the threshold and sometimes turns back in fear and disbelief.

Doubt is directly opposed to faith on the battlefield of the soul. Doubt and disbelief are the enemies of faith. If we have faith in a particular man, then we trust him in all kinds of ways, but if we have doubts about a man, then we trust him with nothing. Our relationship to the Divine is similar: our faith and trust in Him is inversely proportionate to the degree of doubt. The more we trust Him, the more He reveals Himself to us, and the more He reveals Himself to us, the less we doubt. In the Bhagavad Gita, Arjuna stands out as a man with a great deal of faith in Krishna. He was offered a choice between commanding a great army without Krishna or a small army with Krishna as his chariot-driver. He chose Krishna as his charioteer and rejected the large army because he had faith in Krishna. Nonetheless, before the battle of Kurukshetra, even with Krishna as his charioteer, he was beset with fears and doubts. But after Krishna spoke the Bhagavad Gita to him he engaged in the fearful battle and said, "My delusion is gone. I have regained my memory through Your grace, O Krishna. I am firm; I am free from doubt. I will act according to Your word." (Gita, XVIII/73) Of course Christianity affords the classic example of "Doubting Thomas" who would not believe until he actually placed his fingers in the wounds of Christ. "Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." (John, XX/29)



Doubt and fear are interrelated. They are both the sons of ignorance. They are all to be found in the realms of darkness. Knowledge is the sunshine that triumphantly disperses darkness and its consorts. Because this age of Kaliyuga is an age characterised by darkness, ignorance and disagreement, doubt and fear are predominant at this time. Kaliyuga, thankfully, does not last forever, but when mankind is in the midst of it, it seems interminable. Yet even in this age it is possible to transcend these inferior modes-- one can transcend when one is in Krishna-consciousness, God-consciousness. It has been calculated that Kaliyuga lasts 432,000 years and that we have now been through 5,000 years of the yuga, but those in Krishna-consciousness are transcendental to all this darkness, for they are in the realms of eternal light, bliss and knowledge. Nonetheless, to arrive at the transcendental platform in this age, one has to disentangle oneself from the Kaliyuga labyrinth. It is during the disentanglement that maya, illusion, doubt, ignorance and despair make their most vigorous assaults.

In the West, especially, so much doubt is due to the method of approach: empiricism, the pursuit of knowledge by observation and experiment, which began spreading like a disease in the 17th century in Europe and was well established by the 18th. Locke and Hume were the great "observers" of the phenomenal world and the methodology resulting from their speculative philosophies fostered the skepticism that gradually corrupted faith for the Western mind. In the 18th century, William Blake, a Christian visionary and a personalist, blasted the European



skeptics and the method of scientific empiricism in some brilliant verse. For example:

Mock on, mock on, Voltaire, Rousseau;  
Mock on, mock on; 'tis all in vain!  
You throw the sand against the wind,  
And the wind blows it back again.

And every sand becomes a gem  
Reflected in the beams divine;  
Blown back they blind the mocking eye,  
But still in Israel's path they shine.

The Atoms of Democritus  
And Newton's Particles of Light  
Are sands upon the Red Sea shore,  
Where Israel's tents do shine so bright.

In universities today, however, the empiricists are considered more "respectable" than Blake and the words of scientists are considered more potent and reliable than the Word of God as revealed in Scripture. Man is now in the material universe; he wants to "know" this universe, and as far as he is concerned, science is his best tool. Science is based on empiricism, and doubt is the basis of empirical proof. The knowledge man is now seeking to acquire is, according to the Gita, knowledge in the modes of passion and ignorance because science is concerned with knowledge of the material universe, and this knowledge acquired by science is being used by man to lord it over the material nature. This has "progressed" to such an extent that there have been recent attempts to institute a religion based on chemicals (psychedelic drugs) and the empirical process of psychology. Vain men are trying to use their tiny brains to puncture a realm that can only be known through faith, devotion, and the Grace of God. As a result the Supreme has strictly confined them to the material universe and the limited knowledge associated with it,



which is no more than knowledge in the modes of passion and ignorance. They are only scientists and they know nothing of the transcendental spiritual realms that compose three fourths of the creation. Because they are recalcitrant children of darkness, they have been confined to material nature and their attempts to break out of it through super drugs and sputniks will always prove futile because their scientific methodology, based on doubt and empiricism, will continue to drag them back to the material world. Thinking the physical, material universe the all in all, they set about conquering it like children and blatantly deny the spiritual (non-empirical) worlds and, in addition, deny God, devotion, and the Scriptures that point to the spiritual worlds. The scientist never acknowledges that he automatically accepts so much on faith-- his very breath, for example, that makes it possible for him to pursue science and the empirical path.

Such respected "oracles," great-grandsons of old Europe's age of skepticism, have succeeded in instilling doubt in the minds of the young, especially in universities, and have taught them to disbelieve the Scriptures and the Supreme Lord. As a result, general disbelief in the unseen is common. Not that the Supreme Lord is unseen, but His material energy (maya) serves as a guise. "Veiled by My maya born of the gunas, I am not revealed to all. This deluded world knows Me not as the unborn and eternal." (Gita, VII/25) This maya, illusory energy, is the property of the Lord Himself and is kept under His control. "Controlling My own Prakriti (Nature), I send forth, again and again, all this



multitude of beings, helpless under the sway of maya." (Gita, IX/8) He is therefore the Unseen Player behind the play. Science and the emperical method teach man to doubt the unseen, and as a result man frantically searches for signs that can be scurried off to the laboratory for analytical investigation. Christ said, "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign," and Whitman (a "disreputable" mystic and poet) wrote in Song of Myself, "I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey-work of the stars . . . And a mouse is miracle enough to stagger sextillions of infidels. . . . And to glance with an eye or show a bean in its pod confounds the learning of all times." Of course this is roughly dismissed as "sentimentalism" by the learned scientists and empericists.

But what do they give in return? Legions and generations of "sullen mopers and doubters." They briskly dismiss the Scriptures, guidebooks to the Divine, and replace them with analytical textbooks. Totally under the dictates of their senses, they teach their students to trust their senses only. Altogether dismissing the Real, which they think the unreal, they substitute the unreal which they call the "real," and label this process education. In addition, because so many ignorant religionists in this age are indiscriminately citing the Scriptures, people are naturally repelled-- they associate the ignorant proponents of the Scriptures with the Scriptures themselves and consequently turn away altogether from the authorized guidebooks. Since institutionalized religion only offers a closed door intellectually, many turn to the scientists and profession-



al academicians for guidance. Of course these men are only too happy to be gurus, and they lead their followers cheerfully into the swamp of materialism and delusion.

Due to this insurmountable barrier, constructed by centuries of rationalization, speculation and conceit, God-realization has become increasingly difficult. First of all the inherited wall of ignorance and passion must be reduced to rubble. This is a hard task indeed for a lonely soul caught in the involvements of the social order. It necessitates a great deal of stamina, conviction, courage, and knowledge. The masterminds of deceit are clever in their defense of materialism and in their attacks against the Supreme Lord and the spiritual worlds. Krishna says, "Men of demoniac nature know not what to do and what to refrain from doing. Purity is not in them, nor good conduct, nor truth. They say: 'The world is devoid of truth, without a moral basis, and without a God. It is brought about by the union of male and female, and lust alone is its cause: what else?' Holding such a view, these lost souls of little understanding and fierce deeds rise as the enemies of the world for its destruction." (Gita, XVII/7-9) Typically, these demoniacal creatures, who instill doubt in others, cannot answer for death, which poses an inevitable end to their bodies and material possessions. For them, death is an embarrassing subject, an inevitability that is somehow to be overlooked or avoided. The recognition of death and its inevitability, the sensing of one's finite self, the body and its constituents, to be moving towards death, can be the first step in reducing the wall of ignorance and passion to rubble. Doubts may still remain, but at least a man conscious



of the inevitability of death and its implications may be able to see through the shallow guise of materialism and its allurements. The perception of one's miserable material condition and the desire to escape death can mark the beginning of the spiritual life. At this point one may approach a spiritual master.

Unfortunately, the doubts are immediately transferred to the spiritual master. Because there are so many unqualified, self-proclaimed gurus, the neophyte is naturally dubious in the beginning. His way of thinking has been so conditioned by science and the materialists that he may often see the guru as "quaint" or "old-fashioned" or perhaps just short of mad. Of course, there is the initial difficulty of finding a competent spiritual master in this age of Kaliyuga, but if, through the grace of the Supreme Lord, one is so lucky, then one's trust is strengthened through increasing association and gradually, by the help of the guru and through the grace of the Supreme Lord, the darkness of one's doubts are one by one dispelled by the light of knowledge. In this process, the Supreme Lord may speak in several ways to dispel fear, ignorance and doubt-- through the guru, through the Scriptures, or directly. In this matter, Lord Krishna speaks through the Bhagavad-Gita: "Now listen to the wisdom of yoga, armed with which, O son of Pritha (Arjuna), you will break through the bonds of karma. In this no effort is ever lost and no harm is ever done. Even very little of this dharma saves a man from the Great Fear." (Gita, II/39-40) This Great Fear is caused by the seemingly endless circle of birth and death, the net that is continually entrapping the materialists,



scientists and speculative philosophers who turn from the Supreme Lord. The Supreme Lord alone can grant liberation from this cycle to which the individual soul has been confined since time immemorial. He only grants this to the soul that, in all sincerity, turns to Him and surrenders to Him. "Take refuge in Him alone with all your soul, O Bharata. By His grace will you gain Supreme Peace and the Everlasting Abode." (Gita, XVIII/62)

In the process of surrender, innumerable doubts continually assail the neophyte, especially as he approaches the threshold of liberation. Maya, the material nature, is very strong, and the memory of one's past karma, the ghosts of habit, still linger before the candidate for liberation, trying to get him to retreat while retreat is possible. They are constantly reminding the individual soul of his weaknesses and imperfections, which in truth may still be there and are recognized by the neophyte. In this regard, the attempts of the neophyte toward purification and perfection of self are continually thwarted by his lower nature. Krishna warns of this: "There is no creature here on earth, nor among the gods in heaven, who is free from the three gunas born of Prakriti." (Gita, XVIII/40) Therefore Krishna does not expect perfection of the individual living entity: "One ought not to give up the work to which one is born, O son of Kunti, though it has its imperfections; for all undertakings are beset with imperfections, as fire with smoke." (Gita, XVIII/48) Rather, the process is one of surrender and devotion to the Supreme Lord Who grants liberation through His boundless Grace, not through the "earnings" of the devotee. This Grace enables one to come to Him despite one's imperfections. "For



those who take refuge in Me, O Partha, though they be of sinful birth-- women, vaisyas, and sudras-- even they attain the Supreme Goal." (Gita, IX/32) Even Lord Jesus Christ, the symbol of perfection in the Western World, deprecated His human nature to teach others. When addressed as "Good Master," Christ said, "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God." (Matt, XIX/17) Therefore recognition of one's imperfections due to material contact should not be an impediment on the path back to Godhead. One should run roughshod over them, trampling them and the creeping doubts they nourish.

But how does one run roughshod over imperfections and doubt? How does one win the bout to rout out doubt, clearing the road back to Krishna? Once it is clear that doubt is the hell of the human soul, and that, as Petrarch once wrote, "The end of doubt is the beginning of repose," we can then begin to recognize doubt as doubt, as a keen eye can recognize weeds in a garden, and we can begin to uproot the cause of unhappiness. Seeing that doubting the Supreme Lord, His words as revealed in Scriptures, His emissaries, and ultimately our very selves, only leads to a self-defeating unhappiness, we can be therefore willing to discard our doubts. As Krishna says in the Gita, "The man who is ignorant and without faith and always doubting goes to ruin. Not this world nor the world beyond nor happiness is for the doubting soul." (Gita, IV/40) The will to disbel doubts is a big step toward taking the leap of faith, that "terrifying" plunge out the open threshold of material existence and into the spiritual ocean. Partly the disbelief of one's own ability to attain self-knowledge, doubt is conquered swiftly by knowledge



imparted by the Grace of the Supreme. Krishna: "Solely out of compassion for them (His devotees), I, dwelling in their hearts, dispel with the shining lamp of wisdom the darkness born of ignorance." (Gita, X/11) Once the Supreme is seen, then the darkness of doubt is scattered by His light. The process of seeing God is the process of God-realization, Krishna-consciousness, and is most easily accomplished in this age through the process of bhaktiyoga, or devotional service which basically entails chanting the Holy Names (Hare Krishna, Hare Rama), in addition to working detached from the fruits of labor, reading the Scriptures, following the regulations of the spiritual master, and totally surrendering to the Supreme Lord. This process may be gradual or sudden, but as one progresses in the dharma one chooses to follow, doubts, fears and ignorance are overcome. "With sins destroyed, doubts dispelled, senses controlled, and devoting themselves to the welfare of all beings, the sages attain freedom in Brahman." (Gita, V/25)

Therefore recognition of doubt and disbelief as fetters binding one to unhappiness is the first step in cutting these fetters. In our present state of material bondage, we are bound by nature to the flesh. We can hardly, out of our own efforts, break loose from the grip of a force that has been binding us since time immemorial. Surrendering to the Supreme Lord, Krishna we must petition Him to release us. Recognition of our release from material bondage is the process of enlightenment.

This enlightenment of the devotee perfectly enables him to distinguish the spirit from the matter because the knot of spirit and matter is unlocked by the Lord. This knot is called Ahamkara which falsely obliges a living being to become identified with matter. As soon as, therefore,



this knot is loosened, the cloud of all doubts are at once cleared. He sees his Master and fully engages himself in the transcendental loving service of the Lord, making a full termination of the chain of fruitive action. In the material existence, a living being creates his own chain of fruitive work and enjoys the good and bad effects of those actions life after life. But as soon as he engages himself in the loving service of the Lord, he at once becomes free from the chain of Karma and all his actions no longer create reactions in the material energy.

(Swami Bhaktivedanta, Purport, Srimad Bhagavatam, Vol. I, p. 133.)

This process of breaking free is the process of liberation. This is achieved through devotional service to the Supreme Lord, for it is the Supreme Lord only Who awards liberation. Liberation is incomplete as long as one has not surrendered to Vasudeva, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. "At the end of many births the man of wisdom seeks refuge in Me, realizing that Vasudeva is all. Rare indeed is such a high-souled person." (Gita, VII/19) Transcendental service of the Lord carries us into eternity. At death, all material connections are severed, but this transcendental service continues. Although this cannot be "proved" to the empirical scientist, it is revealed beyond the shadow of a doubt to the devotee by the Supreme Lord. "Proclaim it boldly, O son of Kunti, that My devotee never perishes." (Gita, IX/31) Knowledge that the Lord keeps His Word in this matter dispels all fear and doubt. This is beyond all mundane considerations, and the devotee is advised not to engage in idle debates with mundane word-wranglers, for "He who replies to words of doubt, Doth put the light of knowledge out." (Blake)

There is no doubt in the ocean of Divine bliss. Doubt, fear and ignorance belong to this relative world which is the abode of darkness, the perverted reflection of the spiritual world. Doubts and fears assail the man who is about to break



away from material bondage. In the spiritual world, the Kingdom of God, doubt is impossible because there we are in the abode of Bliss-Knowledge-Absolute, having been lifted, through grace, into a region where we can come to know the fullness of our nature and God Himself. Acting as a sort of quaint American guru, the poet Whitman in Song of Myself delineates his own spiritual fears and doubts and exhorts the young nation to take the spiritual plunge willingly.

Down-hearted doubters dull and excluded,  
Frivolous, sullen, moping, angry, affected, dishearten'd  
atheistical,  
I know every one of you, I know the sea of torment, doubt,  
despair and unbelief. . . .  
Be at peace bloody flukes of doubters and sullen mopers . . .  
Each who passes is consider'd, each who stops is consider'd,  
not a single one can it fail . . . .

. . . Dear son,  
Long enough have you dream'd contemptible dreams,  
Now I wash the gum from your eyes,  
You must habit yourself to the dazzle of the light and of  
every moment of your life.

Long have you timidly waded holding a plank by the shore,  
Now I will you to be a bold swimmer,  
To jump off in the midst of the sea, rise again, nod to  
me, shout, and laughingly dash with your hair.

Finally, we might recall the example of Sir Isaac Newton who saw himself as a child on the seashore, and his discoveries nothing but the colored shells. He realized he had no knowledge of the great ocean that lay before him, yet he perceived what he could with the faith of a child, and the knowledge he thereby acquired shed light that has dispelled a great deal of ignorance, fear and doubt. How much more light a fully surrendered devotee of the Supreme Lord could shed to dispel doubts and ignorance would be, in comparison, inestimably greater. But he must first be willing to take the plunge and splash in.



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